The Stars Are Stigmata

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/72952106.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Arcane: League of Legends (Cartoon 2021)
Relationship:	Jayce/Viktor (League of Legends)
Characters:	Jayce (League of Legends), Viktor (League of Legends)
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Space, Hurt/Comfort, Angst with a Happy Ending, Mercyfic, Fear Of Rape/Non-Con, Unfounded Fear, Dehumanization, Fear, Language Barrier, Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Unexpected Heat, Alien/Human Relationships, Captivity, Caretaking, Unexpected Kindness, Unreliable Narrator, Happy Ending, Aliens, Omega Jayce (League of Legends)
Language:	English
Collections:	Mercyfic Bingo Prompt Event 2025
Stats:	Published: 2025-10-24 Words: 7,007 Chapters: 1/1

The Stars Are Stigmata

by Daykeeper

Summary

The alien looks at Jayce like he’s a piece of meat.

Jayce grips the bars of his cage and tries not to tremble. Fear means weakness, and as Jayce has always been taught, aliens will prey on any hint of weakness that he shows, using it as a weapon against him. Despite his best attempts not to show his fear though, his teeth start to chatter and a sob slips from his throat.

But what does it matter anyway? What could his terror possibly matter now, when he’s found himself held captive by aliens, stranded impossibly far from Earth? What could allowing himself the indulgence of a single sob matter when he’s helpless and staring down the cold, eerily emotionless eyes of an alien that he can only assume wants to hurt him?

Notes

Yelp's Earth Goods was one of the first fics that I read in the mercyfic genre, and it sparked my love for mercyfic! I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say I've read it more than fifteen times over the years. I've always wanted to write my own mercyfic with a similar vibe, so here we are!

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by Earth Goods by yelp

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Jayce grips the bars of his cage and tries not to tremble. Fear means weakness, and as Jayce has always been taught, aliens will prey on any hint of weakness that he shows, using it as a weapon against him. Despite his best attempts not to show his fear though, his teeth start to chatter and a sob slips from his throat.

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Jayce has been imprisoned for nearly a week, although it's hard to tell the true passage of time for certain with how irregular the light schedule of his cell is. And in that week, none of his alien captors have taken him out of his cage yet or interacted with him, save for taunting him as they push trays of food into his cell.

It would be naive for him to hope that there won't be pain awaiting him as soon as he weakens enough to not be able to put up a fight. And with how his muscles feel weaker with each day that passes where he doesn't get enough food, Jayce can only assume that pain is coming and *soon.*

The alien standing in front of him is a new one that Jayce has never seen before. They're not among the group of Jayce's captors - Jayce has memorized their faces by now - and of a species that is new to Jayce as well. Their body is tall with long limbs, segmented like an insect. Inlaid, ridged grooves run along the surface of their metallic textured skin, like tree bark. And perhaps most distinctive of all, a third arm protrudes from the alien's back, towering above its head and moving with hypnotic jerks and spirals that have no pattern to them, as if the arm operates with a mind of its own.

How easy would it be, Jayce thinks as he watches that third arm flex in the air, for the alien to encircle that arm around his throat and choke the air out of his lungs with barely any effort, never letting go. Even then, the alien would still have two free hands to do anything of their choosing - hurt Jayce, maim him, restrain him.

Unlike the loud grunts and incessant chatter that Jayce has become accustomed to from his captors, this alien is *quiet.* The alien approaches Jayce's cage with inhuman fluidity in their movements and even with the pin-drop silence in the room, Jayce can barely hear the sound of the alien's legs striking the ground.

While his captors were loud, at least it meant that Jayce could always hear and anticipate their arrival ahead of time. But this alien? They don't speak, sneer, nor mock Jayce. They simply regard Jayce with a tilt of their head, and their pure silence sends chills down Jayce's spine.

Then, what happens next happens so fast that Jayce doesn't comprehend it at first.

One of Jayce's captors walks into the sterile white room and chatters at the alien. The alien hands over a coin and makes a single *click click hum* sound in response. The alien really does sound like an insect, Jayce thinks faintly, before his captor swings the door to his cell wide open.

A dim sort of hope fills Jayce, seeing the empty space between him and the rest of the room. If he just bolts now, then he could make his way out, find an escape-

The alien wraps their cold hand around Jayce's wrist, like another set of manacles, and Jayce's hope comes crashing down around him. It dawns on him with certain sickening clarity that he's just been sold, and that this alien is now his owner, the herald to his new hell.

He never should have let himself hope in the first place.

The grip on his wrist is cold and rigid with no give, but surprisingly not tight or painful. It doesn't feel like the alien intends to crush his wrist as an introductory gift and - Jayce swallows his tears away - that's *something*, at least. Small mercies, and all that.

The touch is the first physical contact that Jayce has had with an alien since his capture. The memory of his capture alone is enough to make Jayce sick with nausea as he replays the clang that the titanium door to his spaceship made the moment when the aliens raiders breached. He shudders as he remembers how invasive the hands of his captors felt on his body as they pried him from his pilot seat and put him into restraints, overpowering him.

Would this new alien's touch be rough and brutal when they touch him in the privacy of their own quarters, Jayce wonders. Or deceptively gentle like now, at least until the alien decides they've had enough of this farce and then, the pain comes. And when the pain comes, Jayce reminds himself, he'll be entirely powerless, helpless to it all.

It's the helplessness that terrifies him - knowing that even if he were to attempt to retaliate, he'd only be beat in a matter of seconds. So he doesn't resist and goes along without a struggle although it breaks the part of his heart that promised Viktor months ago that he'd see him again. Viktor… god, *Viktor*… Jayce doesn't know if he'll ever see Viktor again, now.

The alien tries to pull Jayce to his feet, but Jayce's legs are far too weak to support him. His knees buckle. With a gasp, he stumbles and his body sways dangerously. *No, fuck,* he's going to fall, but the alien must sense his disorientation because they sweep Jayce off his feet in the span of a heartbeat.

Jayce cries out as his stomach lurches to his chest from the quick movement. When he regains his bearings, he finds himself held in the strange alien's arms, being carried as if he weighs nothing. Against his bare back, he feels the segmented carapace of the alien, cold to the touch and vibrating with a strange sort of rumble with each breath the alien takes.

Jayce slumps in the hold, resigned, as the alien carries him out of the raiders' spaceship. How strange. He's being taken to a new sort of prison, too weak to even get the dignity of fighting his fate. But his time in captivity must have changed him because as his new owner strides out of the room that he was imprisoned in, all he can feel is weary sort of gratefulness -

grateful that out of everything the alien could have done, the alien hasn't shown him cruelness yet.

Cruelness would be forcing Jayce to crawl all the way to the new cell that awaits him in the alien's spaceship that they're walking towards. Cruelness would be digging into the thinness of Jayce's body while the alien carries him. In fact, cruelness is the opposite of the way that Jayce is treated right now.

Jayce is not sure if he's delirious or dreaming - perhaps both - but even as the alien walks towards their spaceship at a brisk pace, Jayce feels no pain. He's aware that he *could* be in a world of pain. But he's *not*. The alien never jostles Jayce and is careful with their grip, avoiding the countless places on Jayce's body where bruises are littered.

Maybe the alien doesn't want to damage him while they carry him back to their ship so they can savor his first cries of pain in the privacy of their spaceship, Jayce thinks bitterly. Regardless, after a week of captivity, the painless touch tugs at Jayce's resolve, making him want to sink into it.

If he could just close his eyes, it would be all too easy for him to pretend that he's being held in Viktor's arms right now.

Viktor had always been an enigma. He and Viktor had studied together at the spacefaring academy back on Earth, growing closer and closer with each month they spent at each other's side. Slowly, Jayce watched as Viktor's aloof exterior began to crack and found himself utterly in love with the warm interior Viktor started to show that felt so dearly like home.

In their entire three years at the academy, Viktor had never revealed his secondary gender to Jayce. He had made many excuses - that it wasn't a good time, that he was too shy, or that he wanted to wait till after graduation. Of course, Jayce respected Viktor's privacy, but at the same time, he wanted to hug Viktor tight in his arms and tell him that hell, it didn't matter what secondary gender Viktor was.

Whether Viktor was an alpha, beta, or omega - none of it mattered because Jayce's inner omega was already halfway in love with Viktor, and that would never change no matter what. He would have loved anything Viktor was, as long as it was *Viktor*. There was no place where Jayce felt safer than in Viktor's arms, when they would cuddle together in bed after a long day of fieldwork and fall asleep after doing *nothing,* just like how the both of them preferred. No sex, just the intimacy of their bare skin brushing together, Viktor's hands rubbing circles into Jayce's back.

Then, graduation happened, and both Jayce and Viktor received solo pilot assignments with a timeline for return to Earth in six months. Jayce never told Viktor how he felt, and Viktor never revealed his secondary gender to Jayce. And now, out of all the regrets that Jayce has as he's ferried away into the alien's spaceship with no expectations of ever coming out, he regrets most not asking Viktor for a hug one more time.

Jayce wonders if he'll get to feel Viktor's arms around him ever again.

Humans are rather new to spacefaring, but they've been progressing in spaceflight development steadily. Aliens are known, but humans are only in the first stages of diplomatically establishing contact with aliens, which is to say - no human has seen an alien in person with their own eyes. Not yet, that is. That's what Jayce's cohort in the space academy was training for - spaceflight with the end goal of eventual alien contact.

Preparing for alien contact is altogether different from finding yourself sold to an alien with what feels like titanium for limbs, though. As the alien brings Jayce inside the sleek body of their spaceship, it's hard for Jayce to remember why he wanted to do spaceflight in the first place.

The alien uses their third arm to close the door behind them. After the door swings shut, the lock automatically engages with a *hiss* and the door disappears into the wall panel.

Jayce swallows, hard. There's no way out now. No matter which way he slices the situation, there's no escape for him. He's too weak to try anything, much less somehow find a way to return to Earth in his current state. A whimper makes its way out of his throat.

It's unfair. It's so unfair.

As far as Jayce can tell, there's no one else in the spaceship other than him and the alien. He's locked in complete isolation with his new owner. In the empty, cold expanse of space, if he were to scream, would anyone even hear him? Would anyone *care?*

God, he doesn't even know what to expect from his new owner. Pain, medical tests, brutality? His mind whirls through the multitude of possibilities where he's treated as some sort of alien play toy for the foreseeable future.

The alien carries Jayce past a control room, filled with shiny knobs and dials. If Jayce weren't so frightened, he probably would have found the control deck fascinating with its polished design, gadgets and switches covering every inch of its surface. Now? There's nothing Jayce wants more than to get off this godsforsaken floating piece of metal.

The alien takes him into a smaller room with what looks like a bed in the corner. The bed is an amorphous thing with no clear shape to it. In a way, it reminds Jayce of a beanbag, but on a scale that is *much,* much larger. The bed dips slightly when the alien places him in the center of the material. His smaller frame contrasted against the vastness of the bed makes him feel pitifully inconsequential.

The new room that he's found himself in must be the alien's private quarters, he realizes. The room is more warmly lit than the rest of the spaceship, and there is a more intimate feel to it with a desk next to the doorway with a softly glowing screen and a shelf filled with texts in alien languages he can't read. And of course, he's lying on the strange bed that is no doubt the alien's bed, seeing as it's large enough to fit the size of the alien's body.

Jayce wonders what it means for him to have been taken into the alien's private room, to be placed on their bed, no less. Nothing good, he supposes. It must mean that the alien wants to keep an eye on their new pet at all times. Jayce decidedly avoids thinking of the other way that being placed on the alien's bed could be interpreted (his limbs being restrained against

the bed, agonizing strokes against his flesh, *dear spirits have mercy,* please anything but *that*).

Staring up at the alien standing, no, towering above him while he sits naked on the alien's bed, Jayce feels tiny and small and scared. He hugs his knees to his chest and tries to not shiver, but he's naked and cold. There's not much warmth in the frigid vastness of space. Here, Jayce feels alone and colder than ever.

The bed is soft under his bare skin. Of course, after a week lying on the cold, hard floor of his cage, he imagines that anything would feel like bliss compared to *that*. Regardless, as he tangles his fingers in the plush material of the bedding, he's glad for any small amount of comfort that he can get.

This is where it all starts, he's sure of it. This is where he'll find out just what exactly the alien has planned for him and just how painful it will be.

What would Viktor have wanted? Viktor would have wanted him to be brave. Viktor would have wanted him to do whatever it takes to hold on, to survive, so that no matter how unlikely, he might find his way back to Viktor one day.

Jayce tries to summon a little bit of the bravery that he so admired in Viktor.

He stares up at the unmoving face of the alien. Their face is so eerily still it looks as if it's been carved from stone.

"Hello? Can you understand me," Jayce tries. His voice is hoarse after a week of shouting at his captors to be let go.

The alien responds with a tilt of their head, but otherwise makes no noise.

Jayce's desperation grows. "I'm sentient. I'm alive," he pleads. "Fuck, do you even care if I'm alive? I feel pain too, just like you. If you hurt me, I'm gonna -" he tears up. "I'm gonna feel it. It's gonna hurt. I'm so scared. Whatever you want to do with me, I don't want it, please."

The alien does nothing but take a step closer to him. The resulting silence in the room is deafening.

Jayce doesn't know whether he should laugh or cry. What does any of his begging matter if the alien can't understand him? Here he is pleading for his life, and more than likely, the alien just sees him as an animal, a defenseless play toy.

Then, the alien extends their third arm towards Jayce. The arm bridges the space between them in an instant, and gently, oh so gently, makes contact with Jayce's forehead. The touch is so light that he barely feels it.

Icy terror washes over Jayce. He flinches away from the touch, hard. "Oh, fuck," he cries and scrabbles as far back as he can before his back collides against the wall. Trapped, he's trapped. His pulse rings in his ears.

He could have taken pain. He would have preferred any kind of pain, in fact. It's the potential of having his head messed with that *terrifies* him above all else.

Back in the academy, he's heard whispers of aliens that existed that could mess with your brain, take away your sight or senses for as long as they liked. Or worse, thrall you and take away your free will.

Pain is something that he can endure. Losing his sanity on the other hand, well, there's no recovering from that, *ever*. He needs his sanity for if, no, *when* he makes it back to Viktor one day. He imagines the look of devastation Viktor would give him if he came back a husk of who he was, and Jayce feels his own heart breaking. He can't do that to Viktor, he *can't*.

"Please. Please don't do this to me," Jayce begs when the alien leans over with their third arm reaching towards him, trying to touch his forehead once again. "Stop, please. Don't do this to me, fuck, *please.*"

He's whimpering, he realizes, but the sound is muffled in his ears. He can picture his body slackening against the bed when the alien invades his head. The grieving sob he would release when he thinks his last free thought, before his thoughts no longer are his own.

The alien must pick up on some of his distress because blessedly, they stop and take a step away from Jayce.

Jayce gasps as his heart pounds in relief. The adrenaline leaving Jayce's system leaves him plunged into the coldness of his body once again. He hugs himself while his mind tries to process the interaction. He has no idea what to think of this development. Surely it cannot be… that easy? All he did was cry, beg for the alien to stop, and then somehow, the alien *did* stop.

The alien warbles a sad, little chitter, almost like an apology. They let out a few soft clicks before they stride over to the other end of the bed to grab a blanket and they hold it out to Jayce.

Jayce flinches from the alien extending out their arm at first, expecting it to be a trick. He braces for a strike or worse, the return of the third arm, but nothing happens.

He stares at the blanket, incredulous. None of his previous assumptions make sense anymore, he has to admit. The alien's simple act of offering him a blanket upheaves his entire thought framework around the alien. And Jayce is nothing if not a scientist.

A hypothesis forms.

"Thank you," he says, taking the blanket in his hands and wrapping it around his naked body. He holds it close around him, like a lifeline. It is a relief being covered for the first time in days. "You can't understand me, can you?" he asks.

No answer. The alien stays motionless, watching him. They're always watching him. But for the first time in a long time, Jayce does not feel like prey.

He is wary of the alien, but he feels the kindling of curiosity too.

“And you don’t want to hurt me, do you?” Jayce murmurs.

He holds a hand out and steels himself. His hand shakes, but he holds it out, regardless. If the alien wanted to, now would be their chance to hurt him, especially when Jayce is the one reaching out and initiating contact this time.

The alien tilts their head and brushes their hand against Jayce’s fingers, like a butterfly landing, before they pull away. For a fleeting moment, Jayce feels the cold, hardened skin of the alien, but there is no pain that follows at all.

It seems that the alien is just responding to his physical movements. When Jayce cried and cowered in front of the alien and begged for them to stop touching him, they took a step back and let him have his space back. When Jayce stumbled and was about to collapse on the way out of his cage, the alien caught him and carried him carefully to their spaceship without aggravating any of his mottled bruises.

And perhaps most baffling of all, Jayce has been given a blanket to hold snug against his chest and hug for warmth. He wonders if the alien had noticed him shivering and fundamentally understood the feeling of *being cold*, or if the alien simply wanted to provide him with an object of comfort.

Regardless, it really does seem like the alien doesn’t want to harm him, for now at least.

The realization makes Jayce feel a little bit less scared, less alone. Because the alien is as alone in not being able to understand Jayce as Jayce is unable to understand the alien’s clicks. Even though the alien holds all the power in this strange dynamic, Jayce does not feel as afraid as when he first was brought into the alien’s spaceship. And that is a relief in and of itself.

He hugs the blanket closer to his chest and wonders what will happen to him now. He hopes that the alien will let him fall asleep in their bed and finally get some rest after a week of torment. Maybe if he’s *good* and quiet and goes along with whatever the alien wants him to do, then the alien will grant him an opportunity for rest?

He should have known better than to tempt his fate though, because of course, the next worst possible thing that could happen *does* happen.

Jayce feels a prickle on his skin, starting at his neck and radiating outward with urgency. *No*, it can’t be-

It’s his heat, and judging from the swiftness with which fire spreads through his bloodstream, it’s a forced heat too. His entire body feels flushed. Fuck.

He curses the bottle of water that his captors gave him the day before he was sold. In that moment, driven mad by thirst, he thought the water was a strange act of kindness, but now he knows what it was - water laced with artificial heat inducers; a last cruel parting gift for him before he was sold.

As the Earth saying goes, out of the frying pan and into the fire.

Jayce stares at his hands and wills them not to shake. He's on a timer now. How long does he have left before he's in full blown heat and completely out of it? Twenty minutes at most, he supposes, and that's guessing *optimistically*.

Omegas in heat usually seek out safety and touch. Gentle touches, mostly. It is a misconception that all human omegas want sex while in heat. In his own heats, Jayce has only ever craved the comfort brought on by light, *non-sexual* touches over his back, shoulders, or arms. Or circles rubbed into his back along with kind praises whispered into his ears.

Exactly like how Viktor would do it, his mind whispers. Oh, how Jayce wishes Viktor were here right now. Viktor always had a way of making him feel safe like no one ever could, especially during Jayce's heats.

How the hell is going to explain all of this to the alien though? How is he going to explain his heat preferences and the mere concept of a heat to an alien that cannot understand a word that he says, and only responds based on his body language?

Jayce knows that the alien doesn't want to hurt him, but what will the alien think when he's out of his mind, limping towards the alien and pleading for their touch? When he's begging for any kind of touch to soothe the heat in his body?

It's his worst fear come to life. If the alien chooses to have sex with him, then he'll be helpless to stop it. And isn't that a cruel thought? Knowing that in the midst of his heat, he'd crave touch so badly that a part of his brain would probably interpret *any* touch as a good touch, no matter how much he doesn't want sexual ones.

Jayce whines without meaning to. His head feels fuzzy. His heat must be progressing faster than he anticipated. *Oh no*.

He has to at least try to communicate something to the alien before it's too late. Anything is worth an attempt at this point.

"I don't know what you've heard about human omegas, or if you've heard anything about humans at all, but we don't always want sex while we're in heat," Jayce says. He holds his hands out like a plea, a plea for the alien to understand. "I'm about to go into heat and I'm going to be -"

The heat tearing through his body makes it increasingly harder for him to string together coherent thoughts.

"I'm going to be desperate for touch. I'm gonna beg you to touch me, but I don't want sex. There's a difference. Please don't-" Jayce swallows down a sob. "Please don't rape me."

The alien holds their hands out, mirroring Jayce's movements, as if asking Jayce to trust them. They tilt their head towards the bed, but they don't move forward.

They're waiting for permission, Jayce realizes, as he studies the alien's posture. The alien is asking for his trust and for permission to enter the bed. *Asking*, not demanding.

The simple act of giving him a choice in the matter makes all the difference in his final decision.

Jayce holds his breath and nods.

The alien climbs into the bed, clicking softly as they move. They move slowly, giving him more than enough chances to back out. But when he doesn't voice his disagreement, the alien sits down on the edge of the bed, facing Jayce. With their third arm, they grab another blanket over from the bedside table and deposit it on Jayce's lap.

Jayce blinks. "For me?" He doesn't understand why the alien is doing this, *any* of this. He doesn't know what the alien gets out of giving him a second blanket, but he's grateful nonetheless.

Two blankets. Jayce unfolds the second blanket and gathers it in his arms, hugging it. *Two blankets*. His inner omega trills.

The blanket is far larger than the ones that Jayce is used to on Earth. It is made of a soft material that he cannot identify, plush like wool yet somehow also cool to the touch. A distant part of his brain laughs at how the alien who was so intimidating at first apparently has a selection of soft blankets.

Jayce's heat makes him long to snuggle into the soft fabric of the blanket, so he does. What does he have to lose, after all? He buries his head into the blanket, rubbing his cheek against the fabric. He revels in the comfort that the blanket provides.

The scent of the blankets is light and warm, with hints of clove and pine. It reminds Jayce of all the times when he ran into Viktor in the academy library at night. Surrounded by dusty tomes and flight manuals, Viktor would pat the seat next to him without looking up from whatever he was studying. And then the two of them would study until the late hours of the night. By the time the sun dawned, Jayce would be slouched over his book, half asleep, lulled by Viktor's lovely scent wafting around him.

The blankets almost smell exactly like the scent that would ferry Jayce to sleep on restless nights, when Viktor would lend him his sweater to nest with.

But that is impossible, Jayce tells himself. The blankets smell *like* Viktor, but as much as he would like to dream, they do not smell *of* Viktor. Viktor must be light weeks away from him, on his own mission, and hopefully not despairing too hard over the loss of Jayce's correspondence. The similarities in the alien's and Viktor's scent must just be a kind coincidence from the universe.

With one blanket covering his body and another blanket that he can hug tight against his chest, Jayce almost has enough to feel comfortable on the bed. There is just one thing that is missing… touch.

His heat now in full swing, Jayce craves touch with an ache deep in his soul.

There's no one around that can provide him with the touch he needs except for the alien.

The alien chitters and must sense his growing restlessness because they inch closer and hover their hand above Jayce's shoulder, a silent question in their posture.

They're handing the final choice over to Jayce. He stares at the offered hand, touched that the alien is giving him the final say in his fate.

From what he can gather from the alien's body language, the alien is asking for permission to touch him, to comfort him perhaps after how distressed he must look. In exchange, Jayce must choose to trust the alien.

He could say no. He could hide under the blankets and attempt to ride out his heat in isolation as torturous as that would be. He believes that the alien would respect his choice, even if he were to say no.

But ever since they got onto the alien's spaceship, the alien has only ever been considerate of him. For all the pain and suffering that Jayce expected to endure once he was sold to the alien, the alien has only surprised him again and again with their thoughtfulness and care.

Any other alien could have just freely taken him and touched him without any regard to his wishes, but this alien *cares*, strangely enough.

He wants to say yes. His instincts howl at him to say yes, yes to touch, yes to *relief*. But, how would Viktor have wanted him to respond? Viktor would have told him to trust his instincts.

So Jayce nods and screws his eyes shut. Spirits, please don't let him regret his choice.

The alien's hand lands on his shoulder, and all the breath leaves him in a relieved *whoosh*. It is a soft touch. It is touch at last.

Jayce blearily peeks his eyes open to see the alien using their third arm to take a pillow from the bedside and prop it on their lap. They motion for Jayce to rest his head on the pillow.

Slowly, Jayce reclines fully onto the bed, stomach down, and lays his head on the pillow. His heart thuds in his chest. With him face down on his stomach and head in the alien's *lap*, he truly is completely vulnerable now. He's given his trust to the alien. He can only hope that his tentative trust won't be shattered.

The alien trails slow circles into his back, around his shoulder blades and up and down his spine. The touch washes over Jayce's frayed nerves like a balm. The pure relief of the sensation envelops him.

It is the first kind touch that Jayce has felt in weeks, no, *months*. The reality of flying a solo assignment is going months without a single touch from another human. And in the wake of the torment he suffered after his capture by the alien raiders too, the alien's gentle touches feel like pure bliss, so good that Jayce could cry.

When his blanket becomes the slightest bit loose, the alien fusses over him and tucks him into the blanket again, making sure that no part of his body is exposed to the chill of the spaceship. The alien's touch never wanders near his head, almost as if they remember what happened earlier. Their touch doesn't wander anywhere below his waist either.

The alien strokes back and forth across the line of tension stored in Jayce's shoulders, and Jayce feels his eyes closing against his will. The hum of the spaceship engines below them is like white noise. It would be a terrible idea to fall asleep in front of the alien and become completely unguarded. But hey, it's not his fault when the alien somehow knows how to touch him in all the ways that make him want to melt into the bed.

In his heat-addled mind, Jayce can think of nothing but how safe he feels here in the alien's bed. It should be absurd, feeling safe in the bed of an alien that bought him? Except it *isn't* crazy at all.

When Jayce does so much as shiver, the alien adds *another* blanket on top of Jayce. And the familiar scent of the blankets wafts around him like a cocoon of comfort, making Jayce feel floaty and calm.

Who are you and why do you know how to treat me to help me feel at peace, he wants to ask the alien. Why does your touch feel so familiar, and why do I feel so safe with you even though that's the last thing that I should feel? He knows that the alien wouldn't understand any of his speech though, so he doesn't say anything.

He's halfway asleep when he sees the alien hovering their third arm above his head. He stares up sleepily at it. He studies the unique shape of the three claw-like prongs that extend out from the arm before he realizes that he should probably be frightened. This could be the alien taking advantage of his heat to finally play with his head.

Or, it could be the alien offering him *headpats*.

Would Jayce risk it all for headpats? If he were not in the midst of his heat, his answer would have definitely been a resounding no. But now? All he wants is fingers carding through his hair, just like how Viktor would massage his scalp after a long day.

Apparently, the answer is yes. Jayce would risk it all for headpats.

He lifts his head up and bumps his forehead against the segmented digits of the alien's third arm. As he lays his head back down on the pillow, he sighs as what feels like fingers tangle in his hair and stroke gently.

Jayce closes his eyes and shudders in the pleasure of the sensation. The alien strokes Jayce's back and shoulders with their hands, while their third arm pets Jayce's hair. They never tug harshly on his hair, despite all the tangles in it. The soothing touch along his scalp is the last push that Jayce needs before he finally falls asleep.

Somehow, impossibly, the last thing he hears before he drifts off is a voice in his mind, as familiar as it is new. *"Sleep, Jayce. I have you."*

Jayce wakes up to the scent of sweetmilk, which should be ridiculous because aliens don't drink sweetmilk, or do they? There are two cups of steaming hot sweetmilk on the bedside counter. One for him, he assumes, and one for the alien. The alien is not in the room right now, so they must have left the sweetmilk for him, intending it for when he woke up.

He's alone in the alien's bed, still wrapped under three layers of blanket. It is a struggle wriggling his way out of the warm blanket nest that beckons him to doze back asleep and sleep off the last remnants of his heat. But he has to take stock of his body now that his heat has mostly worn off and he's in full control of his body again.

Jayce has no idea how long he slept for, but it must have been long enough for him to not feel exhausted for the first time in days. He studies the bare skin of his arms, legs, and torso. Somehow, there are no new bruises on his body. He feels no more sore than the previous day.

Even in the midst of the haze of his heat when his mind would have been the most muddled and his body vulnerable, the alien didn't take advantage or hurt him at all. Instead, the alien took care of him, comforting him in all the right ways to make his inner omega feel protected and safe. It's a strange concept to wrap his head around.

He hears the click of a door opening and turns to see who it is.

"You're awake," Viktor gasps.

Viktor's crying, Jayce thinks faintly. He's never seen Viktor cry before.

And then reality hits him. That's Viktor standing by the door, his knuckles white as he grips his cane. Oh *shit*, it's Viktor.

"I'm sorry, Jayce," Viktor cries. His eyes are red rimmed with tears streaming down his face. "Will you ever forgive me? I never wanted things to happen this way. I was going to find a way to tell you about who I was once I saw you again, I swear. Any way would have been fucking better than this."

Viktor's rambling. He only rambles when he's consumed by nervousness, Jayce knows. But this isn't him merely nervous. No, this is him *terrified*, gripping his cane like a lifeline and refusing to meet Jayce's eyes. He's terrified of Jayce's reaction

"I'm so sorry," Viktor begs. "By the time I tracked down your location in the den of those alien raiders, you had already been there for four days. And it took me three days to fly to you, even at max speed. And then after I rescued you, I couldn't shift back into my human form no matter how much I wanted to because the shift takes hours."

"Viktor," Jayce whispers, heart breaking at the sight of the devastation, plain and simple, on Viktor's face.

"You were so scared, Jayce," Viktor sobs. "And because of me. I hated seeing you scared because of me, because of who I was. I never wanted you to find out this way."

"Oh, Viktor," Jayce breathes. "So you were the alien?"

“You hate me, don’t you? I understand. How could you not?”

Viktor looks so small standing by the doorway with his frame stiff and slumped in resignation. He looks so scared, and it reminds Jayce of the fear that he felt when he realized he was sold to an alien.

Except, the alien was Viktor and Viktor never hurt him, nor pushed him beyond what he was comfortable with. Rather, Viktor cared for him in his heat, making sure that he was never in distress. It is exactly what he fell in love with Viktor for - the way that Viktor makes him feel seen and cherished like no one else can.

“Look at me,” Jayce murmurs.

Viktor’s eyes snap to his.

“I don’t hate you. I could never hate you. And yes I was so frightened, but you treated me with such care that I eventually lost most of my fear.” Jayce half smiles, half tears up. “I missed you, Vik.”

There is a prickle in the back of his head. It is a resounding echo of *I missed you too*.

“Your emotions?” Jayce asks.

Viktor takes a step back. “It’s a residual connection from when I touched you with my hexclaw.” He gestures at his back, where his third arm is in his alien form. “The mental connection will wear off in a while. You don’t have to worry, Jayce. I have not messed with your head in any way. *Please* trust me on that. I would never want to hurt you.”

All of a sudden, Viktor’s attempt to touch his forehead makes sense now. “Is that how you can communicate in your other form?”

“Yes,” Viktor sighs. “My hearing in the other form cannot process most of the subtleties in human speech. Nor am I capable of speaking in that form, other than the clicks that you heard. After I rescued you, I wanted to be able to relay my thoughts to you to help reassure you that you were not in whatever hell you believed you were in and to hear your thoughts in response.”

“Spirits, so *that’s* why.”

Viktor sniffles as his crying tapers off. “It didn’t matter what I wanted though because when I touched your head that first time, it scared you so much that I felt so horrible.” He whispers, “You were already so scared, Jayce. I would have been a monster if I pushed you for a mental connection, even if it might have helped in the long run.”

“I’m relieved you didn’t push,” Jayce admits. “It made me start to trust you.”

“You really don’t hate me after everything?” Viktor breathes.

“The opposite, really. I’m so glad it was you.” Jayce stands up, shaky, and holds his arms out wide open. He feels overcome with relief and joy after seeing Viktor again for the first time

in months. He remembers longing for a hug from Viktor during his time in captivity, and now, Viktor is finally here. Even one more second where he goes without a hug from Viktor feels like an eternity far too long.

He marches towards Viktor, singular determination in his steps. He can finally hug Viktor now. He can have *everything* now, do everything he's ever wanted to do with Viktor. "Hug me," he demands. I missed you so damn much."

Viktor swallows. "Even though I'm not human? Even though I will not always look like-" He gestures at his human form. "*This?*"

"You're *you*, Vik," Jayce says. "I will always want a hug from you. *Always."*

Viktor laughs and wipes at the tears in his eyes. "And I will always want to hug you."

As they collapse into each other's arms in a hug, it feels like becoming whole again.

End Notes

Don't worry, Jayce gets plenty of chances to cuddle with his alien boyfriend later😊

sleepmakeswaves - The Stars Are Stigmata

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